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The Emperor's New Clothes

A Study of the Leadership of the European Union

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Abstract

This thesis examines how the leadership of the European Union has developed over the years and what has caused these changes. The Commission and the Council will be the compared objects for this analysis.

The institutions are delegated unique powers in the executive politics but the leadership of the Union is formally largely unregulated, and is often described as shared between the two institutions. This balance has tilted back and forth over the history of the EU which has periodically raised the matter of a leadership deficit in the Union, not least in present time. Upcoming reforms, with a permanent President, are trying to overcome this disadvantage.

By conceptualising leadership, facilitated by established international relations theory, it will be shown that this deficit is only partly true. Instead there is substantial evidence revealing that the roles of the institutions have shifted. The entrepreneurship which used to be the leading tool of the Commission is increasingly being performed by the Presidency in the Council. Instead the Commission has become a dominant player, on equal level with the Member States, involved in inter-state bargaining. The visionary guidance and consistency in the leadership have, on the other hand, diminished in the transformation.

Key words: leadership, Commission, Council, agenda-setting, entrepreneurship

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1 Introduction

“Who do I call if I want to call Europe?” Former US Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger’s famous quote is as current and provoking today as it was when it was stated. Who is the European executive and what powers does he/she have? This question is off course a simple one but nevertheless it can not be answered with any simplicity. At the same time as the democratic deficit is widely debated the issue of leadership is often still too sensitive to address. It has in many ways been avoided to formalise an effective executive which can be the single leading force, comparable to a state government or, even better, a Union emperor. Instead the leadership of the EU has been divided in several hands where the Commission and the Council of the European Union are the two most prominent. Therefore it is often described as being of dual character.¹

Even since the executive politics as such is a crucial part of the Union’s governance it is far too wide to be of any analytical use. What is even more obscure between the institutions is the overarching leadership, guiding the actors of the Union. That use to be referred to as the horizontal leadership in contrast to the vertical leadership that deals with the relationship between the leader and the electorate. The EU has often been described as a complex polity or international organisation, where multi level governance creates unexpected results due to compromises of an intricate nature. Baring this in mind, the horizontal leadership could be crucial in holding together the different levels and thus getting everyone to strive towards a common goal. This has made several scholars to suggest that the leadership is a crucial determinant of which success or failure will be the final outcome.² With this background as point of view, it is not extraordinary that the call for more clear leadership structures is demanded and that the lack of the very same has been recognised.³

What is important to keep in mind, regarding the European Union, is that it is a polity (or organisation) that has changed a lot throughout its history of existence. Despite, or perhaps because of this, it is plausible that the EU will continue to develop and the suggestions of how this will progress are not few, to speak in modest terms. The changing leadership is naturally also a part of this ongoing process. This means that the leadership abilities of certain actors today is not the same as it was yesterday and might not be the very same tomorrow. However, this process is making an analysis of the leadership even more interesting as it can tell a lot about the dynamics of European politics.

¹ Hix, Simon, *The Political System of the European Union* (2005) p. 27

² Doig, Jameson W, Hargrove, Erwin C, *Leadership and Innovation* (1990) p. 16

³ Nugent, Neill, *Editorial: Building Europe- A Need for More Leadership?* (1996)

The European history after the Second World War is full of events and processes that have had huge impact on the states and their cooperation, so also in the relationships within the European Union. Perhaps leadership as an object of study is too dependent on these contextual circumstances that it will not be able to analyse as such. With reference to what was stated above however, there will be good reasons to presume the opposite. Of course, all general theories of integration of the EU can be related too, as reference points, but this thesis is certainly not going to be yet another contribution to the integrational debate. The institute of leadership will be in focus here.

1.1 Purpose and Questions

Leadership in the European Union can thus be described as very vague and perhaps also weak. Believing that leadership as such, is an important factor for generating policies and accomplishing progress in the Union, this needs to be conceptualised and analysed.

The purpose of this thesis will therefore be to analyse how the leadership part of the executive is organised in the European Union and to see how the institutions perform the leadership. In this respect, it will also be analysed in what way they are connected to each other. This will not be easily done. Leadership as a concept could imply many sorts of aspects. The first obvious task will therefore be to break down the leadership concept to a workable theory, operational on the institutional units.

When those workable criteria are found, they will be applied on the European institutions, predominately the Commission in comparison to the Council of the European Union. Realising that there might be other prominent leadership actors, the thesis will nevertheless keep focus on the two, even though other institutions or states may be touched upon indirectly. A common knowledge from the start is though, that the roles of the institutions have developed and that leadership capacities have diminished throughout the years. It is often said that the leadership capacities of the Council has developed to the detriment of the Commission.⁴ In this respect, the institutions can not be regarded as definite. They must be compared to themselves under different periods. Therefore a historical outlook will be presented where the leadership criteria are being recognised in the different eras. The focus will be on finding evidence for the leadership attributes, developed in the theories, in the actions taken by the institutions and thus evaluate their respective leadership capacities and performances.

The questions connected to this are two. The first; how is the institutional base of leadership organised in the EU and what capacities do the institutions have?

⁴ See e.g. Metcalfe, David, *Leadership in the European Union Negotiations: The Presidency of the Council* (1998) p. 416.

This is mainly a question which demands a descriptive answer rather than an explanatory one. The second one is considering how the capacities of leadership in the institutions have changed and what has caused this development. This will be answered through an application of the theories on the empirical material gathered of institutional behaviour through history. Here, a more explanatory approach will be provided. Finally, and connected to the latter, some tendencies will be provided in relation to what can be expected from constitutional reforms.

1.2 Method and Material

The methodological considerations are crucial for organising the proceeding analysis. The thesis will obviously have comparative ambitions as it will be done in time as well as in space. The aim will be to compare how the institutions perform different leadership criteria. Hence, one must keep in mind that the selection of different entities is extremely limited. There are very few institutions in the EU politics and even fewer when it comes to institutions with executive or leading powers. The selection, of the Commission and the Council, is thus, already clear from the beginning. One could off course include other units with potential leadership powers but then there is a great risk in not being able to draw any consistent comparable conclusions.

The focus can therefore not be on clarifying or falsifying the theory but instead provide some knowledge of how the institutions that are examined act as leaders. Shortly, it is the institutions as objects for the analysis that are the interesting part and not the accuracy of the theory as such. By comparing the performances of the Commission and the Council, in different time periods, the ambition will be to draw conclusions of how they act as leaders and what differences there are between them. Furthermore, the empirical material will increase the understanding of the hypothesis, that there has been a shift from the Commission to the Council in many of the leadership facets. The analysis will, in this regard, have many descriptive aims as well as explanatory ones.

The design that will be used in this work comes close to a comparative, theory consumption, analysis.⁵ Such a study can not take into consideration all aspects related to the investigated phenomenon and this will not be an ambition here. Instead the aim will be to find the most prominent factors in the theory of leadership and see how well it fits on the leadership performed by the institutions. The main concern in a study like this is the internal validity of the results. With numerous external variables that can affect the result one has to be precautious about drawing too far-reaching conclusions. Hence, there is a serious risk that more questions will be raised than I will be able to answer. Even so, I believe that

⁵ Esaiasson *et al.* *Metodpraktikan* (2004) pp. 97f.

the results of this inquiry will be rather modest; nevertheless I hope it will provide a deeper understanding of how the units (institutions) behave in leadership matters.

The first step of the thesis however, will be to bring order in the concept of leadership. Hence, there will first be given a rather comprehensive unravelling of the concept which will facilitate a continuing analysis. As the perception of leadership is fairly broad and contains many different modes of action, the theoretical investigation of leadership is vital for the following study.

The type of method can indeed be questioned in its very essence. The results of the analysis will tell very little of the theory as such. However, this will not be the primary objective here. The units are chosen for its purpose and the results may not be too revolutionary nor convincing if combined with too far reaching generalisations. The institutions selected are deeply interconnected and to compare them on their own merits might be highly questionable. In fact it could be argued that the thesis rather deals with one or two case studies in order to investigate the units. This might be true even though it seems mostly like a problem of labelling or grading. Even case studies have comparative aspects since they are always related to something⁶ and especially in this case where there will be comparisons over time as well as in space. At the same time as the units are part of the same polity and processes, with many connections controlling each other, there are many comparisons involved. In summary the comparison will be both intra- and inter- institutional. Also other institutions will occasionally be part of the analysis which implies further comparisons. Consequently, the result of the thesis will thus tell how the leadership of the Union relates to existing theories.

The material on the European institutions is certainly very broad. Through European journals it is easy to find a relatively wide range of materials on most aspects on the European politics. Instead, the difficulty lies in limiting the immense material in a purposeful way. However, the material dealing with leadership explicitly is very limited why this kind of material is far more helpful. This was somewhat surprising and encouraging at the same time. I have tried to exclude much literature dealing simply with the legislative process even though it gives some aspects of the initiating stages, which have links to leadership attributes. As the topic for the thesis is touching upon integration theory some material must also be handled with precaution as it might be too closely linked to certain approaches. Following the most prominent articles of leadership in the EU and their sources one can distinguish a pattern that is fairly workable.

The process of selection and exclusion has been time- consuming and, in parts, troublesome to handle but nevertheless I believe that the material used is beneficial and fairly well representative. Articles of international journals have been complemented with relevant literature on theory as well as descriptive information about the institutions which has been important for the basic knowledge in the thesis.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 119

In the research, it has been very striking that there has been a silent shift in focus from the Commission to the Council in leadership literature. This shift seems to have taken place in the beginning of the 90's when the Council got considerably increased attention. This further indicates that the hypothesis, that the leading role of the Union is changing, is correct. Even so it has not been explicitly touched upon in the literature.

The nature of the thesis explains why the material is ranging from very recent to fairly old, namely in order to capture relevant material about both the Commission and the Council and how their abilities and capacities have changed over the years. Even so, a focus has been given for the latest period with upcoming reforms.

2 Theory

Leadership is a very broad and poorly defined concept. It has been used in several studies in different fields but when it comes to political science and even more so, to the field of regional or supranational organisations, leadership as phenomenon has been particularly neglected and subject of controversy and misunderstandings. It is often serving as an exogenous variable which is difficult to single out.⁷ Despite this, it is not uncommon to see studies that build on the presumption that leadership is a critical determinant and even the decisive factor of success or failure in political negotiations.⁸ Also the present study relies heavily on the notion and on the importance of leadership. Therefore, the following theoretical investigation will be absolutely crucial for the coming analysis.

There are a few things that must be remembered before dealing with different theories of leadership. The theories can, even though they are all concerned with leadership of different kinds, be extremely different in their scopes and aims. Most theories however are concerned with individuals as leaders, especially the ones originating from economic management environments. Those theories must be handled with precaution in this study since they are being transferred to collective institutions. On the other hand, the same could be advised when handling international relations theory since it almost exclusively relates to international bargaining in creating international regimes. Even though the entities for analysis in this study can have rather different characteristics, the leadership attributes might have similar connotations.

Initially there is need for a general definition that could serve as guideline in order to frame the theoretical discussion. Leadership can thus be defined as an asymmetrical relationship of influence in which one actor guides or directs the behaviour of others toward a certain goal.⁹ What is evident from this superficial definition is that the leader should be equipped with some level of power, which gives him/her influence to use in directing the followers. Keeping this power in mind, it is evident that what we are aiming to discover is the leaders' abilities to act and perform and the efficiency of the leadership. An effective leadership can further be defined as a performance of targeted actors engaged in the negotiation that always are, in the long term, guided in the direction of a final, instrumental agreement shaped in the line with the intentions of the leader.¹⁰ Hence, it is not just a question of abilities but also results. Other interesting criteria could involve

⁷ Laitin, David – Lustik, Ian, *Leadership: A Comparative Perspective* (1974) p. 89.

⁸ See e.g. Young, Oran R, *Political leadership and regime foundation* (1991) p. 281 or Doig, Jameson W, Hargrove, Erwin C, *Leadership and Innovation* (1990) p. 16.

⁹ Underdal, Arild, in *International Multilateral Negotiation* (Zartman, I William 1994) p. 178.

¹⁰ Sjøstedt, Gunnar, in *International Negotiation* (Berton, Kimura, Zartman 1999) p. 227.

the legitimacy of the leader; however this will not be evaluated in this work. Furthermore the definitions of effective leadership need to be a lot more clear and conceptual if operational in the study.

2.1 International Relations Theories

In the field of international relations, leadership has been an important factor in concluding negotiations and to explain outcomes of bargaining processes. Some theories focus primarily on the relationship between the leader and the followers while others are mostly concerned with the different modes of successful effective leadership. There are also theories of both formal and informal types of leadership. Sjöstedt explains that sometimes the performance of leadership is highly visible, for example where there is a prerogative for an actor, predominantly for chairs and other procedural bodies, to initiate proposals. On the other hand, the leadership might be, and probably often is, uncodified, when an actor take advantage of its influence over others.¹¹

Even though a division between formal and informal leadership can be important and beneficial for structuring one must reveal where the actual leading capabilities are located as well. Underdal focus on the demand and supply situation of leadership. He puts forward the argument that formal capabilities and positions in combination with individual behaviour and ambitions result in potential leadership.¹²

With these clarifications we can go on to different types of effective leadership. The following presentation will originate in Young's theoretical framework on division of leadership and will be complemented by other theoretical approaches. He recognises three types, common in the international arena; structural, entrepreneurial and intellectual leadership.¹³

2.1.1 Structural Leadership

Structural leadership can be described as the ability for an actor to translate the material resources he possesses into bargaining leverage in accordance with his preferences.¹⁴ This is thus a very direct form of leadership with material power as the main instrument. The actor will use this power and by all means possible try to guide the other actors in line with his self interests. This is a type of leadership used predominately by powerful state actors with a great deal of resources to include in the negotiation. This will also presume that the leading actor is one who

¹¹ Sjöstedt, 1999, p. 227.

¹² Underdal, 1994, pp. 181-182.

¹³ Young, 1991.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 288.

actually has a lot of preferences that he is striving to impose on the others. It seems from a general point of view that this type of leadership is activated in sensitive issues of great importance, where it is difficult to achieve consensus. The essential feature of structural leadership lies in the ability to translate the structural power into bargaining leverage as a means of reaching agreement.¹⁵

The structural leadership can be said to go along two different lines of action with the similarity that it is performed unilaterally. An actor negotiating on behalf of a hegemon or in other ways someone with a very strong position can relatively easily use different kinds of threats and promises as negotiating strategy. It can be realised by everything from side payments and bribery to promises of compliance on other issues or negotiations. Even though these actions could be beneficial and easy deployed when one is equipped with a lot of resources, one could also risk the leading role by being met with suspicions and loss of credibility. Hence it is a matter of timing and great caution.¹⁶

The second line of action has more to do with “carrots” instead of “sticks”. The unilateral action could be performed by exercising moves, outside of the negotiation, but in the field which the negotiation is concerning. This could be very powerful before the negotiations have commenced since the moves made can work as a social persuasion on the other parties. This however requires, as with the other types, a great deal of power and resources as well as a considerable amount of control of the process.¹⁷ Once this mechanism is in force, it can be very persuading and thus limiting the reasonable options for the other parties.

The structural leadership is most efficiently exercised by a powerful state actor. However, it can also be a possibility of several actors to do the same if they move together and perhaps they can be even more efficient. Other actors, than states, can also rely on this type of leadership if they have a strong structural position with convincing instruments. In connection to this, it is also worth mentioning that the result strived by the structural leader can be of various content. It must not only be in line with material self interests but can also be in line with the actor’s interest of being valued as a credible leader. In this way the leader can use its power in order to find any solution, just to get the satisfaction of seeing progress and to get the recognition of the very same.¹⁸

2.1.2 Entrepreneurial Leadership

Entrepreneurial leadership implies that the leader is relying on its own skills to frame issues and put together deals in order to avoid problems of collective stagnation.¹⁹ The overarching goal is to find means to achieve common ends and thus, puts a lot of pressure on the actor to create models to find the way. The

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 289.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 290.

¹⁷ Underdal, 1994, pp. 184-185.

¹⁸ Young, 1991, p. 293.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 293.

entrepreneurial leader must therefore possess the professional competence required for the actual problems to overcome. The leader's chance of providing success is either to propose a substantive common good or to rely on its position as an actor perceived as credible and skilful and thus exploit the faith from others as a leader.²⁰

However it should be evident that this mode of leadership is more delicate than the structural one. Instead of "brute force" the leader must be very active and energetic to appear as professional and constructive. In this respect, entrepreneurs are very dependent on the environment surrounding the negotiations. It helps for instance if the leader is acting in a time of urgency or crisis where other solutions are less likely to appear. It should not be mistaken though, that the entrepreneurial leader necessarily is an outside party. Just as the structural one, the entrepreneur could be part of the negotiating process with its very own preferences. It is not just a mediator in the sense that it wants to accomplish deals to any price.²¹ Instead the entrepreneur may advance political interests for a specific group or in order to satisfy its own interests. A collective good will be sought and supplied only when the entrepreneur finds it profitable and resources are provided to do so.²²

In theory there are many characteristics that an entrepreneurial leader must have. This leadership is also, in comparison to the structural leadership, activated from the very beginning of the process and not just the bargaining and negotiation stage. One of the main points for entrepreneurs is to come up with innovative ideas and efforts and to carry these into effect. Therefore they must be able to identify new missions, programs and problems. Furthermore, they need to enhance the technical expertise and reveal potential areas of vulnerability in their proposals.²³ From here the actors must be able to offer a set of benefits in the negotiation that the followers are willing to buy, in order for them both to feel that they gain from the proposal.²⁴ Also Underdal recognises several requisites and tasks for the entrepreneurial leader starting with diagnosing the actual problems. Thereafter comes the crucial point of discovering, exploring and inventing possible solutions for the parties. Often this is connected to the task of providing some consensual knowledge which the negotiation can be based upon. During this process the entrepreneurial leader must also have good brokering characteristics and the skill to mobilise different groups in line with the amended proposal.²⁵

With this immense task ahead, what institutes are there for the entrepreneurial leadership? Perhaps the most important one is the agenda setting instrument which gives the entrepreneur the possibility to shape how issues are presented for consideration to other actors. The agenda setting is constructed by setting focal points, around which member state bargaining can converge. Since they are

²⁰ Underdal, 1994, p. 189.

²¹ Young, 1991, pp. 294-295.

²² Fiorina, Morris P, Shepsle, Kenneth A, in *Leadership and Politics* (Jones, Bryan D 1989) p. 32.

²³ Doig *et al.*, 1990, pp. 7f.

²⁴ Fiorina *et al.*, 1989, p. 34.

²⁵ Underdal, 1994, p. 188.

controlling the agenda, they can accentuate certain policy fields and thus drawing attention to the importance of these issues. Furthermore this gives the entrepreneur a possibility of controlling the starting point by creating the initial point of reference to which everyone else must relate.²⁶

According to Fiorina and Shepsle, the agenda setting instrument is an excellent means of manipulation. It provides the entrepreneur with an opportunity to affect outcomes disproportionately by controlling exactly what is being voted on and especially in which order. In this way, the entrepreneur can use this instrument in line with his own preferences. This is certainly the matter when there are many different opinions on complicated issues, as often is the case on the international stage.²⁷

2.1.3 Intellectual Leadership

The intellectual leadership has clear links with the entrepreneurial one but has nevertheless very important attributes on its own. It is the ability of an actor to produce the intellectual capital that shapes the debate and perspectives of other actors.²⁸ As we saw under the entrepreneurial part this is an important task in connection to put issues on the agenda but here it means that it can be done throughout the whole negotiating and bargaining process, as well as start before. The intellectual leader is also more concerned with the power of ideas and seeks to become the leading actor by showing a great deal of knowledge and understanding for technically difficult questions. In general the intellectual leader always tries to keep an open door to new ideas while the entrepreneurial one is more concerned with this initially and thereafter works hard for promoting this initial standing. The intellectual leader is more of a thinker who seeks to articulate the systems of thought and underlying values rather than his/her negotiating skills. However, it is not uncommon that both types of leadership are being performed by the very same actor.²⁹

Another distinctive feature for the intellectual leader is that, by putting the main emphasis on the power of ideas, he/she lacks the same set of preferences that the structural or entrepreneurial leaders are guided by. Hence, the intellectual leader could be a less prominent actor, for example an individual or a smaller organisation or state. The actor could have preferences as well but it is far from necessary in order to become an intellectual leader. The most important characteristics are naturally that the actor is equipped with good information concerning the issue and efficient channels to inform other parties of the ideas. This sort of leadership is a very time consuming one, since the promotion of new

²⁶ Young, 1991, p. 294.

²⁷ Fiorina *et al.*, 1989, p. 28.

²⁸ Young, 1991, p. 298.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 301.

ideas generally has to trump already established mindsets and hegemonies, before the new ideas can become the intellectual capital.³⁰

What can be concluded from this sort of leadership is that, even though it can appear to be somewhat weak in comparison to the other types, and also less effective, it could still be valuable with an intellectual leader. It can move mindsets forward in a progressive way and in doing this, it is generally without the same risk of being pushed aside as for the other leadership types. As other leaders generally are very cautious about pushing too hard for their concerns, risking undermining their own position, the intellectual one can act more freely under the disguise of ideas and values.³¹

2.2 Organisational Theory

The economic discipline has for a long time been concerned with leadership as an important factor in business management and organisational theory. It has also, in many ways, served as a role model in theory as well as in corporate practice. Much of the basic economic leadership theory can thus already be incorporated in IR theories but there can still be significant factors that will complete the theory framework above.

In business, leadership is linked to management. While management generally can be described as ways of authoritatively managing the organisation, leadership has a more communicative approach where the essentiality is to set direction and to find means for motivating the colleagues. However, it is very clear within the business sphere that both management and leadership have to be flexible since they should be adopted to follow the climate on the market. Hence, there are different leadership styles for different organisational circumstances.³²

The economic entrepreneurial leader is very attentive towards the corporate climate and it is essential for the leadership to always communicate with the organisation. The leading actor must in this sense also be regarded as a good diplomat as it is trying to be open to suggestions from other actors at the same time as being persistent to its own preferences.³³

It is essential for an entrepreneur in general, to have a clear vision of his enterprise and as a leader to always keep this vision alive and visible to other actors. The leadership must direct the followers in line with the vision in a clear line of action and create an appropriate culture with the overarching vision as signpost. As mentioned above, the vision needs to be properly communicated but it is also of great importance that the leader acts visionary. That is to say that the

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 298.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 301.

³² Burns, Paul, *Corporate Entrepreneurship* (2005) pp. 80-81.

³³ Hisrich, Robert D - Peters, Michael P - Shepherd, Dean A, *Entrepreneurship* (2008) p. 74.

leader must find long term solutions, sustainable and encouraging for others.³⁴ This type of long- term, visionary leadership common in economics is important but nevertheless somewhat neglected in the political field. At the same time one must not think that a guiding vision is totally free of faults. An attentive leader should be able to review and revise the vision as a consequence of changes in the actual environment. Hence, flexibility is an important criterion for the corporate leader.

Part of the visionary leadership is a core of fundamental values that will guide the organisation. They are deeply embedded in the systems and procedures of the organisation and works partly as legitimising the leader. In order for an actor to perform effective leadership, it is important that he can protect and promote these fundamental principles.³⁵ In difference to the vision that could change throughout the process, the values, should stand firm and should be constant. In spite hereof one would risk the existence of the entire business.

Both visions and values are instruments or attributes that an effective leader should possess. Even though they are important in smaller undertakings, they are increasingly significant as the organisation widens.³⁶ Transferring this to a large polity would hardly diminish its significance. Translated to the EU specifically, the role of a visionary and value based leadership could have the same importance due to the rapid enlargement process. For a European leadership it can be valuable to enhance the two elements and to involve the newcomers as well.

2.3 Combined Theoretical Framework

From this wide theoretical base, outlined above, what can we use for the coming analysis? The EU as a polity is indeed a very complex set of institutions, actors and processes that involves several elements of leadership. With the IR theories we have concluded some criteria that are recognisable in an environment of high politics and power bargaining. At the same time, the economic theoretical perspective has given a better understanding of more concrete measures that leaders could use. Together the theoretical fields will provide criteria beneficial for the following work.

In the coming analysis of the European institutions, it will be evaluated on what level they possess these criteria and how this has changed throughout the history of cooperation. The focus will be on the structural leadership and distinguish how the actors can use their respective powers in the bargaining processes and how their respective material powers have changed and affected the bargaining. As well, the entrepreneurial leadership with all its instruments will be examined and especially the institutions power to influence the agenda and their

³⁴ Burns, 2005, p. 87.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

methods of doing so. Finally the intellectual leadership will be sought by trying to reveal the resources that the institutions have and use in shaping the debate and provide intellectual input. In relation to this, the perspectives of economic, organizational theory will be related as it will also be discussed in what way visions and values are connected to the actions by the institutions and what effect it has on outcomes. I have chosen to combine the intellectual leadership with the organisational theory as I believe that visions and values of an enterprise have distinctive links to the intellectual capital of an organisation. The organisational theory is thus the internal part of the intellectual leadership, which in itself is more outbound in structure.

3 Formal Leadership Capacities

Institutions affect outcomes. Both formal structures and informal norms influence the negotiation strategies and behaviour of actors.³⁷ Therefore, before going into the empirical test of the institutions leadership record it is vital to give a brief summary of the formal powers given the institutions by the initiating framework. The institutional powers are most commonly described in a principal- agent relationship.³⁸ This means that the institutions, as agents, are delegated several powers by their principals, namely the governments of the Member States. The reason and extension for delegation to supranational agents can be subject to different interpretations depending on the approach applied. For instance, the delegation can be explained through purely functional reasons³⁹ or even through strictly rationalist objectives.⁴⁰ Some scholars go even further, in the case of the EU, and claims that the framers of the EU treaties clearly intended that the Commission's role be more than just functional.⁴¹

There are probably other explanations for delegating to supranational institutions. However, for this empirical study it is not of great significance to reveal the objectives of delegation to the different institutions. Nevertheless, it will be important to keep the different perspectives in mind going through the ways of leadership performance. For this part, I will concentrate on what powers the institutions were delegated initially and only briefly looking into the rationale of this.

3.1 The Commission's Powers

The Commission is often perceived as the engine of Europe. In the founding treaties the role of the Commission was rather extensively emphasised as it was supposed to define, promote and pursue the Community interest.⁴² The governments of the Member States initially sought an effective delegation to start

³⁷ Elgström, Ole, *European Union Council Presidencies: A comparative perspective* (2003) p.3. For distinction on formal/informal agenda setting see Pollack, Mark A., *Delegation, Agency, and Agenda Setting in the European Community* (1997).

³⁸ See e.g. Pollack, Mark A., *The engines of European Integration: Delegation, Agency and Agenda Setting in the EU* (2003) or Tallberg, Jonas, *Leadership and Negotiation in the European Union* (2006).

³⁹ Pollack, 2003, p. 20.

⁴⁰ Tallberg, 2006, p. 17.

⁴¹ Peterson, John, *The Santer era: the European Commission in normative, historical and theoretical perspective* (1999) p. 47.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 48.

the integration, which demanded a strong supranational institution to generate results. Even though it has been suggested that the question of institutional balance was not prioritised by the founding fathers,⁴³ the delegation at the time was the result of a rational bargaining. It is also highly likely that the compromise of Commission power was the only way of the Members to secure credible commitments which all parties could agree upon in times when the general trust was fairly low.⁴⁴ The Commission was perceived as an honest broker which was a guarantee of equality between the states. Even though the largest states were the ones that easily delegated to the new high authority it seemed in a longer run that the smaller members were most beneficiary of the supranational level.⁴⁵

What were then the powers delegated to the Commission in concrete terms? The Commission could be described as the most supranational executive institution and was therefore equipped with many important leadership attributes. Placed at the heart of the Union it was supposed to play a vital role in the initiating stages of policy making. The Commission is responsible for proposing new policies, initiate legislation and arbitrate in the legislative process, represent the Union in international trade negotiations and scrutinise implementation of Community law, to mention a few of the duties.⁴⁶ Studying the non-exhaustive Art. 211 EC does rather poorly provide an understanding of the Commission's role in the Union. There is no indication of a rigid separation of powers and the Commission is entrusted with executive, legislative, administrative as well as judicial powers without any clear distinction.⁴⁷ From a leadership perspective it seems as the initiating of policy proposals is the most significant empowerment, however also the implementation and monitoring could be vital tools for exercising a leading role.

Flowing from the treaties and the initial compromise of the Commission, its major tasks can be divided in three. Firstly, the Commission has a responsibility of setting the agenda for the legislative process in order to simplify the joint work. The extension of this prerogative has varied over the years and is also partly varying over which legal basis in the Treaty the acts are based on. Formally however, the Commission should, as principle, be the agenda setter in the Community legal order since it is well placed to be a successful policy entrepreneur.⁴⁸ It can rely on the institutional framework, where it is perceived as appropriate because of its neutral position. Secondly, the Commission is seen as the guardian of the treaties. It has a wide margin of appreciation in initiating enforcement procedures towards Member States who does not comply with the *aquis communautaire*. Even though this is not a leadership factor per se it can be used in order to force members in a given direction. Thirdly, even though it is up

⁴³ Cini, Michelle, *The European Commission- Leadership, organization and culture in the EU administration* (1996) p. 13.

⁴⁴ Pollack, 2003, p. 75.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁴⁶ Hix, 2005, p. 40.

⁴⁷ Craig, Paul - De Burca, Grainne, *EU Law: Text, Cases and Materials* (2007) p. 43.

⁴⁸ Borràs, Susana, *The European Commission as Network Broker* (2007) p. 3.

for the governments of the Member States to implement the law of the Union, the Commission has a substantial power to follow up initial legislation by other implementing regulations. This in combination with the monitoring of the budget can be a powerful tool in leading the other actors of the Union.⁴⁹

3.2 The Council's Powers

The Council has always been the most important legislative body of the Union. Even though it is a Community institution among the others, its relationship to the principal is naturally considerably closer. It is therefore not a supranational institution in the same sense as the Commission. However, with the presidential chair, held by every member for six months, a clear delegation is given to that particular agent from the other Council members.

Holding the chair means assuming responsibility for the work of both the Council of the European Union (Council of Ministers) and the European Council.⁵⁰ Even though they are separate bodies they will be analysed much in the same sense since the Presidency is the very same in the institutions. The Presidency of the Council is an institution that has evolved tremendously over the years. In fact, the presidential function was only mentioned in the founding treaties without being delegated any formal functions or specific tasks which it was responsible for.⁵¹ At the outset of the European Community, when the European Council did not exist, the Council was perceived as the decision-making centre of the Community rather than the engine. The Council, as the most important legislative branch, together with Parliament, is still the law making centre and therefore the most powerful institution. Art. 202 EC, which is the basis for the functions of the Council, is mainly stating that the Council is responsible for the coordination of the general policies of the Member States. It is also instructing the Council to confer on the Commission the rules which it adopts. Hence, it is a very weak basis for providing leadership for the work of the Union. Art. 4 TEU on the other hand, instructs the European Council to provide the Union with the necessary impetus for its development and to define the general political guidelines. The latter article was given at a much later stage as meetings of the heads of governments started at a general level in the 60's. However, it was not until the SEA that it was finally institutionalised.⁵²

The leadership functions of the Council has thus developed into being the institution who sets the long term policy goals of the EU and can when they desire, delegate powers to the Commission. The European Council sets the

⁴⁹ Craig *et al.*, 2007, pp. 44f.

⁵⁰ Elgström, 2003, p. 3.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁵² Craig *et al.*, 2007, p. 55.

medium term policy agenda and monitors the national macroeconomic policies of the Member States through the open method of coordination.⁵³

With the introduction of the Presidency the Council has become gradually more significant. Strong central management has become more necessary in order to combat the centrifugal tendencies within the Council. With the increase in power in the institution, a demand for greater leadership was met by the Presidency.⁵⁴ As we shall see, the functions of the chair have evolved through the creation of informal practices, which has expanded the initial tasks.⁵⁵

Most important of the functions of the Presidency is to draw up a list of priorities that will dominate the agenda for the duration of the period of the Presidency. It is disputed how important this agenda-setting instrument in fact is but it has been a constant increase in interest in this function of the institution. The President is also carrying out administrative tasks as organiser and mediating between other Member States in case of controversy.⁵⁶

With this brief look at the formal positions of the institutions I will proceed to revealing the leadership executed by them throughout the history of the European cooperation. Focus will be to reveal how the actual leadership compares to the formal framework of this chapter in addition to the analysis on the informal capabilities from the theoretical perspectives.

⁵³ Hix, 2005, p. 31.

⁵⁴ Craig, De Burca, 2007, p. 49.

⁵⁵ Elgström, 2003, p. 4.

⁵⁶ Thomson, Robert, *The Council Presidency in the European Union: Responsibility with Power* (2008) p. 594.

4 The Development of Leadership

From the formal division of leadership between the institutions, the leadership was subsequently organised along different paths. To simplify the survey of development, I have divided it into three distinct periods. The first period is from the beginning of the Community to 1985 followed by a short but important period of 1985 to 1992. Lastly the period of 1992 to today will be analysed with regards also taken to prepared constitutional changes, which is likely to follow. The three periods are not altogether uniform and they could be divided differently or into even more parts. However, I believe that they are rather beneficial to catch the major developments in the institutional structure.

4.1 The Birth of the Community-1985: the consolidation

The first years of the Community were in several ways dominated by turmoil. The Commission was often criticised for being too centralised to perform any efficient leadership at the same time as the Council did not accomplish any significant reforms, mainly because the governments of the Member States wanted to stick to the agreement of giving the Commission the leadership powers. During the whole period, from the 50's to mid 80's the Commission was often constrained by the Member States for long periods. A too ambitious Commission President was likely to be succeeded by one who solely was committed to consolidation instead of expansive integration.⁵⁷ Several crises in the 60's also played a significant role in shaping the institutions and deeply affected the momentum for leadership. There have been numerous suggestions that most of the 60's and 70's were times of stalemate in the EU and that, primarily the Commission, was unable to provide any leadership for deeper integration. Also the Council's unwillingness to work for any changes of the treaties was considered as a sign of the "eurosclerosis". The question is whether this lack of political leadership from the institutions is actually true.

⁵⁷ Cini, 1996, p. 67.

4.1.1 Structural Leadership

The structural leadership of the Commission in this period is most accurately described as weak. As a new supranational institution, with few guidelines, it ended up with little material power and underdeveloped resources which it could translate into bargaining leverage. Instead a lot of the first years of the Commission were focused on strengthening the internal organisation.⁵⁸ Even though the first Commission President, Walter Hallstein, has a record of being a strong manager for the institution's development, he was succeeded by weaker Presidents. At the same time the members of the college became increasingly heavy political figures, which resulted in more weight and seemingly some structural power. In negotiations however, the Member States easily stopped the Commission if it even came as far as to the negotiating table.⁵⁹

Generally, it takes very powerful actors in order to be able to provide any effective structural leadership. The Commission lacked most such material power. At the early stages of the cooperation, the Commission also lacked the vital relationships to other actors which it could build on in the negotiations. The Commission did not have the connections to the enterprises of Europe nor had it any strong links to the Court of Justice. It did neither have any possibility to use any carrots as the administrative powers still were underdeveloped and could not be used in social persuasion. The Commission's only valuable resource was that it was perceived as an outside actor of impartial conduct. Even though it did not give any material strength it could often get the support of other actors.⁶⁰

Also the leadership of the Council had rather weak structural powers at the early stages of the Community. The Presidency was poorly organised and did not have the necessary resources to push for an own agenda. Instead it was the individual Member States who could use their national strength as bargaining leverage. Naturally, it was the big states, predominately the Franco- German axis, that was the power centre that could push for striking credible deals between the members.

There have been suggestions that the bargaining was sufficient to lead the union to more integration. Governments proved quite capable of decentralised mediation and key compromises in the 50's and 60's were facilitated directly from the leadership from the national leaders, as Adenauer, Mollet and Spaak.⁶¹ With the empty chair crisis in the 60's the Union was stagnated because of this lack of compromises between the big states. This is a sign that an efficient structural leadership was dependent on the major actors from the big states and that the institutions' capacities were poorly developed.

⁵⁸ Cini, 1996, p. 39.

⁵⁹ Peterson, 1999, p. 50.

⁶⁰ Cini, 1996, pp. 67f

⁶¹ Moravcsik, Andrew, *A New Statecraft? Supranational Entrepreneurs and International Cooperation* (1999) p. 286.

4.1.2 Entrepreneurial Leadership

The Commission was initially intended to be responsible for policy initiation and formulation as it was the driving force of European integration. In the first years it was also regarded as rather successful in fulfilling this task. The Commission was set up in order to be able to have a strategic goal setting capacity and managed to lead the Union through the producing of great overarching plans.⁶² From the outset the Commission created an ambitious agenda for cutting tariffs and eventually creating a customs union. Within strict boundaries in the policy field of the common market, the Commission was entrusted with a fairly wide margin of freedom in the policy initiation and agenda setting. There is extensive evidence that the policy entrepreneurship of the Commission was successful in the first years and that the Communities' progress made was primarily due to this fact.⁶³

However, in the 60's and onwards, the Commission tried to expand its capacities into other areas. There was quickly a feeling that the Commission's entrepreneurship spilled-over from common market problems into social fields of politics and under the leading of Hallstein there was an atmosphere of giving the Union a fresh start by expanding its policies.⁶⁴ It was soon clear that, because of the lack of structural leadership, the Commission did not have the muscles for expanding its agendas. It was too heavily dependant on favourable external circumstances for providing leadership. When the Commission got ahead of the Member States in advancing policies, which did not have support, serious conflict broke out which led to a subsequent empowerment of the Council. The Luxembourg Compromise in 1966 obligated the Commission to consult Member States before initiating policy proposals.⁶⁵ Furthermore, the insertion of comitology in the Community system deepened the disputes between the institutions.⁶⁶ All this harmed the Commission's entrepreneurial abilities but the still much absent leadership in the Council, left a considerable responsibility to an entrepreneurial Commission. As demonstrated, this was not without constraint.

Since the disputes between Hallstein and De Gaulle left the Community with lasting impact later Presidents of the Commission kept a much lower profile. However, due to the Commission's development of its formal leadership powers in the early years, subsequent Presidents could still rely on a fairly high capacity as entrepreneurs. There is convincing signs that the Luxembourg Compromise damaged much of the formal position as agenda setter for the Commission⁶⁷ and the slowdown in the Commission's entrepreneurial activism in the 70's led to the so called "europessimism".⁶⁸ One should though reflect the informal powers that

⁶² Cini, 1996, p. 18.

⁶³ Young, Oran R., *Comment on Andrew Moravcsik, "A New Statecraft? Supranational Entrepreneurs and International Cooperation"* (1999) p. 809.

⁶⁴ Cini, 1996, p. 42

⁶⁵ Tallberg, 2006, p. 46

⁶⁶ Dehousse, Renaud, *Comitology: who watches the watchmen* (2003) p. 801.

⁶⁷ Pollack, 2003, p. 122.

⁶⁸ Sandholtz, Wayne – Zysman, John, *1992: Recasting the European Bargaining* (1989) p. 107.

the Commission still could flourish from in times of state uncertainty regarding problems and the potential policy solutions. The Commission kept, during most of these years, a high profile in identifying problems and which policies that could rally consensus.⁶⁹ In this way the Commission performed a rather high level of entrepreneurial leadership.

On the other hand the Council had limited entrepreneurial responsibilities. The Council was a legislative body with no formal agenda setting rights and the agenda was largely predetermined by the work of the Commission. With the tendencies in the 60's, described above, the Council activities rapidly expanded with new working groups and committees. This all lead to an increasing demand in internal agenda management and for someone to provide an overarching leadership.⁷⁰

These changes inspired the construction of the European Council in 1974 which, at least informally, was entrusted with providing an overview and long- and medium term planning and leadership. In the beginning of the 80's the Presidency in the Council had to put forward an agenda for its term in advance which largely came to determine the agenda for the upcoming six months. Also the Council Secretariat was entrusted with more responsibilities in coordinating and planning.⁷¹

This expanding entrepreneurship in the Council was at this stage not as important as it would prove to be. Up to this point the Commission was still regarded as a motor and policy planner due to its formal position. The entrepreneurial leadership was firmly in the hands of the Commission even though the inter-institutional relations became increasingly important.

4.1.3 Intellectual Leadership

The capacities for an intellectual leadership did not as much rest in the resources as in the ideas of the Commission. As a fairly new supranational institution, the resources of expertise and knowledge were modest. However, perceived as an impartial actor with the purpose of proposing ideas for policy solutions and represent the Community's interest, it had a fairly high reputation as a credible actor of intellectual ideas.⁷² It was therefore the visionary ideas instead of expertise which dominated the intellectual capital of the institution.

The first Commissions had to live up to their functional ambitions. From a period up to 1962, the Commission focused a lot on establishing the Community concept instead of advancing their own position.⁷³ Initially, it was also essential to gather the necessary knowledge of the European market by investigating current

⁶⁹ Pollack, 2003, p. 127-128.

⁷⁰ Tallberg, 2006, pp. 46f.

⁷¹ Christensen, Thomas, *The Council of Ministers- The politics of institutionalized intergovernmentalism* (2001) p. 145-146.

⁷² Nugent, Neill, *At the Heart of the Union: Studies of the European Commission* (1997) p. 13.

⁷³ Cini, 1996, p. 41.

needs for reform. Already at this point, the Commission created a network giving them intellectual resources. Subsequently, the Commission got bolder in advancing proposals and was led by its vision of rapidly unifying the markets.⁷⁴ This was a type of goal oriented leadership that for a while worked very well in the Community. In the 60's, however, the strategic goal setting spilled over into other areas which perceived the general view among the Member States that it had overreached itself. The 70's and early 80's was characterised by less visionary leadership and more consolidation of the position of the Commission after the Luxembourg compromise. Furthermore, the visionary leadership was very heavy dependent on the President in office and the Commission had to liaise closely with the Council.⁷⁵ Even so, the common values increasingly rooted in the organisation.

Consequently, the intellectual capacities were periodically quite strong with the Commission but it lacked an institutionalised base, which led to a fragile leadership.

4.1.4 Concluding remarks

Underdeveloped institutions generally dominated the first years of the Community. The structural leadership was to a large extent absent in the Commission. However, there was an embryo of expansive policy initiation, which the Commission could develop by relying on its formal powers. Subsequently, the demand for even more agenda management led to an advancement of the entrepreneurial leadership in also the Council. The leadership was periodically too dependent on external variables and Member State consent to be performed with any distinctiveness. The intellectual leadership was mainly dominated by the Commission's position as an impartial actor of confidence rather than being an institution of expertise or credible values.

4.2 1985-1992: the visionary years

The period from around 1985 to the mid 90's is often described as a high point in the history of the EU. Under the Presidency of Jacques Delors the Commission managed to accomplish a market reform under the SEA and to prepare for the enlargements to EFTA states and Eastern Europe and even more importantly prepare the Treaty of the European Union. It is generally seen as a peak of the Commission's leadership with support of favorable circumstances in the Council.⁷⁶ It remains to see what type of leadership that was actually exercised.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

⁷⁶ Nugent, 1996, p 3.

4.2.1 Structural Leadership

From the preceding period it was concluded that the Commission lacked any strong structural leadership. In the 80's the Commission underwent several expansions which increased its resources, making it a more powerful institution, containing more expertise. Even so it still lacked much of its structural advantages. Instead the Commission had to rely on the consent of the Member States in the Council and for much of this period there was a profound understanding between the institutions. The Commission liaised very closely with the Council which decreased the need for it to engage in bargaining tactics.⁷⁷

Much of the success for the Commission in this period was due to the fact that it was efficient in building alliances, not just with the Council but also with the major European undertakings and organisations. It was able, with its newfound partners, to build coalitions also with governmental elites.⁷⁸ The coalitions were particularly successful since they could benefit from the national economic failures throughout the 70's and 80's and Delors built on the increasing sense of optimism for European solutions.⁷⁹ In the end it was rather coalition-building and visionary leadership that characterised Delors rather than structural power.

What also summed up to the efficient leadership was that the Commission managed to make it more internally efficient. Delors exercised tremendous authority and control of the Commission which he later on could transfer upon other parties.⁸⁰ This made the Commission a better run apparatus which concentrated its resources and made it slightly more structural.

The Council's structural leadership is difficult to assess. The dominating picture is that the structural power still was primarily in the hands of the large Member States but there was also a far reaching consensus in the big questions which opened possibilities for the Presidency of the Council. The rotating Council Presidency lacked the clear formal delegation for pursuing any structural capacity but it developed and grew in stature over time by default rather than by institutional design.⁸¹ This opened the possibility for the Presidency to translate its resources into a position as mediator and broker. Increasingly, the Presidency also used its position to strive for own preferences by "manipulating" the bargaining climate.⁸² Consequently, the Council had wide structural powers mostly defined by the large Member States but increasingly also from the chair.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Sandholtz *et al.*, 1989, p. 116.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

⁸⁰ Peterson, 1999, pp. 52f.

⁸¹ Blavoukos, Spyros – Bourantonis, Dimitris – Pagoulatos, George, *A President for the European Union: A New Actor in Town* (2007) p. 236.

⁸² Metcalfe, 1998, p. 422.

4.2.2 Entrepreneurial Leadership

Delors' Presidencies have in time come to be seen as the high point of Commission activism. It is mainly in its role as policy entrepreneur and visionary leader as this reputation still stands. The Commission was generally well placed to seize the initiative and lead the Union to more integration and did firmly establish itself as an agenda setter.⁸³ Delors effectively launched a renewed energising idea that quickly was perceived as awarding substantial benefits for all Member States.⁸⁴ This renewal was predominately based in the acceptance of completing the market integration but also spilled over in other spheres of politics.

It is highly debated what was the driving force for this renewal of the supranational market orientation. Sandholtz and Zysman propose that both the international and domestic settings provided a window of opportunity for the Commission to exercise policy entrepreneurship. The Member States as well as the Council leadership were slow in reacting and national preferences were not ready or vastly underdeveloped. Thus, the Commission had a wide margin of appreciation in shaping the ongoing debate by advancing solutions to the problems. Hence, it is not possible to explain the renewed drive for market unification without the leadership of the Commission.⁸⁵

The Commission became increasingly efficient in transforming the new "euromarket" orientation into policy proposals. But it was not only the initiation of policies that was outstanding. When certain issues developed further, it was often still in the hands of the Commission to follow up and develop the proposals. With approval from the Member States, the Commission got a wide responsibility of designing and leading it through the process.⁸⁶

The Commission's agenda setting power thus developed a lot during the present period. Most commentators are agreed that circumstances were very favourable because the Commission and the Council were agreed upon most significant issues.⁸⁷ Others emphasise that the Member State uncertainty was the main explanation for the entrepreneurship from the Commission.⁸⁸ However, the successes of the Commission were not just due to its entrepreneurial leadership but also a combination with its intellectual abilities.

4.2.3 Intellectual Leadership

The intellectual leadership of the Commission reached very high levels during Delors' Presidencies. He consciously sought a vision to reignite the European idea

⁸³ Nugent, Neill, *The Leadership capacity of the European Commission* (1995) pp. 609, 616.

⁸⁴ Peterson, 1999, p. 54.

⁸⁵ Sandholtz *et al.*, 1989, pp. 96-107.

⁸⁶ Princen, Sebastiaan- Rhinard, Mark, *Crashing and creeping: agenda-setting dynamics in the European Union* (2006) p.1124.

⁸⁷ Nugent, 1996, p. 2.

⁸⁸ Pollack, Mark A., *Delegation, agency and agenda setting in the European Community* (1997) p. 128.

which had been partly absent for many years.⁸⁹ Delors believed that the economic future of Europe depended on the outcome and success of his project.⁹⁰ He also seemed to transmit this sentiment to the rest of the Commission and other partners in the Union. The internal management was streamlined and internal conflicts were played down. The visionary leadership guided the rest of the institutions and there was a high level of expectations and confidence in that the Commission could deliver.⁹¹ This could further enlarge the sense of purpose from the leadership. The vision consisted mainly in dealing with unfinished European market integration but increasingly also in creating a closer political union.⁹²

Visionary ideas and a momentum for agenda setting can hardly alone explain the success of Commission leadership. An intellectual leader also needs power of ideas and the ability to show knowledge and understanding of complex issues. For the Commission in the 80's this developed through a clearer political steering of the internal bureaucracy and through an intensive coalition building from the leadership. The Commission managed to pick up national measures and translate them into European solutions.

There are however, other interpretations of what role the Commission provided and what impact the leadership had. Moravcsik tend to emphasise the intergovernmental input of vision and claims that the role of the Commission was mainly that of a coordinator and rapporteur. Mediation and other facilitating measures were instead provided by the European Council.⁹³ From the empirical material above, this interpretation seems less likely. Instead, the visionary leadership is what can single out Delors from other ambitious Presidents.

4.2.4 Concluding remarks

As demonstrated, the increasing resources of the Commission did not lead to any significant change in the structural leadership. Instead the entrepreneurial skills and the clear political steering increased the Commission's confidence in building coalitions and enhance the leadership. This could suggest that the success lies in the fact that the Commission was more of a value based leadership. Even if it is a plausible factor it can hardly be possible to single out as a variable. At the same time, the inactivity of the Council seems to be a necessary consequence of the Commission's leading activism.

⁸⁹ Sandholtz *et al.*, 1989, p. 114.

⁹⁰ Cini, 1996, p. 74.

⁹¹ Nugent, 1995, p. 615.

⁹² Cini, 1996, p. 76.

⁹³ Moravcsik, 1999, p. 291.

4.3 Mid 90's- Current Leadership: the great change

After a period of a strong entrepreneurship and visionary leadership from the Commission a great shift occurred in the Union. Important steps of integration resulted in several enlargements and partly new constitutional settings to operate from. Even though the constitutional reforms seemed to be in favour of the Commission it was instead, contrary from what was expected, in the Council the reforms resulted in real development. The new President of the Commission, Jacques Santer, did not have the same mandate for reform as his predecessor with lower trust for the supranational institution as a consequence. The enlargements shifted focus from the Commission's entrepreneurship into bargaining in the Council and a loss of intellectual leadership was caused by the slowdown of visionary ideas from the Commission.⁹⁴ Instead the Commission was increasingly perceived as an extra actor at the same footing as the Member States.⁹⁵ Despite this seemingly great lack of leadership, important functions are still being performed.

4.3.1 Structural Leadership

As presumed, the bargaining becomes more troublesome when more actors are involved. This is plausibly the reason why structural leadership has become increasingly needed in the Union and also why it has become more difficult. Starting of in the many Treaty revisions, through series of internal reforms of the Commission, has resulted in a strengthening of the centrality of the institution. It has become a more efficient organisation and stronger in terms of resources.⁹⁶ Its competence relate further to the regulation of the internal market which has expanded its engagement in also legislative and judicial matters. Hence, the Commission has changed its previous neutral position as it undertakes responsibilities of a highly political nature.⁹⁷ The reforms have increased the organisational top steering which has led to better internal management and the Commission has turned into a program manager with significant muscles.⁹⁸ To a large extent, this has developed at the expense of the policy entrepreneurship as it has weakened the policy proposals from lower levels in the organisation.⁹⁹

What are the structural powers of the Commission then? The Commission enjoys a considerable control over policy proposals and it has a great potential to forge the Member States into cohesion. With help from its Treaty powers, with

⁹⁴ Tallberg, 2006, p. 14.

⁹⁵ Nugent, 1995, p. 609.

⁹⁶ Christiansen, Thomas, *The European Commission: administration in turbulent times* (2001) p. 106.

⁹⁷ Nugent, Neill, 1997, p. 288.

⁹⁸ Bauer, Michael W, *Diffuse anxieties, deprived entrepreneurs: Commission reform and middle management* (2008) p. 703.

⁹⁹ Christiansen, 2001c, p. 106.

supposed support from the ECJ, the Commission has greater political standing and confidence¹⁰⁰ and with its role as the guardian of the Treaties it has gained several tools to persuade the Council into action.¹⁰¹

Predominately, the Commission puts pressure on the Council by drawing on supranational legal obligations. The Commission can pick from different coalitions in the Council, of which are closest to its own preferences, and thereby single out States that are opponents. By its powers to initiate infringement procedures and other administrative powers the Commission has developed a tactics of manipulating Member States preferences.¹⁰² In fact, it is suggested that the Commission has a wide pool of potential means in order to put substantial pressure on the Council. By divide- and conquer- tactics and by taking advantage of potential information asymmetries, the Commission can lead the structural bargaining.¹⁰³ The increasing material resources, centrality of the institution and the powers as guardian of the Treaties are all convincing leverage which alters the other actors' preferences.

Treaty amendments in the 90's and early 2000's resulted in new rules for voting in the Council. Qualified majority voting became increasingly the way to overcome differences among the Members. Even so, empirical material shows that qualified majority voting is rarely used and still is the persuasion of the opponents important in Council bargaining.¹⁰⁴ With an increased number of members the organizational powers in the Council has tilted towards the Presidency.

The Presidency has a prerogative to initiate formal vetoes and steering the Council's legislative work. It has also shown that the Presidency is equipped with such powers that it can use it for pushing for an own agenda.¹⁰⁵ Even though a term as President is fairly short, and does not affect the long-term policies,¹⁰⁶ it is a welcome opportunity to turn focus to some issues and push for certain preferences. There is presumably a difference between different Presidencies in their performance of structural leadership. It is easy to think that larger Member States will be more efficient as structural leaders as it depends on the resources available to them.¹⁰⁷ However, research has discovered that smaller states are judged to be more effective as leaders.¹⁰⁸ Part of the explanation could be that small states are better mediators and better on cooperating with the Commission who has increasingly expanded its structural powers. In fact, it seems as Member

¹⁰⁰ Nugent, 1995, p. 613.

¹⁰¹ Schmidt, Susanne K., *Only an Agenda Setter? The European Commission's Power over the Council of Ministers* (2000) p. 42.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, pp. 39-43.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 44-48.

¹⁰⁴ Hayes-Renshaw, Fiona - Wallace, Helen, *Executive Power in the European Union: the functions and limits of the Council of Ministers* (1995) p. 565.

¹⁰⁵ Warntjen, Andreas, *Steering the Union. The Impact of the EU Presidency on Legislative Activity in the Council* (2007) p. 1137-1138.

¹⁰⁶ Metcalfe, 1998, p. 414.

¹⁰⁷ Blavoukos *et al.*, 2007, p. 247.

¹⁰⁸ Metcalfe, 1998, p. 422.

States are very dependent on the Commission during their Presidencies in order to advance their particular issues.¹⁰⁹

4.3.2 Entrepreneurial Leadership-the agenda setting paradise

The growing agenda of the Union created a shift in the entrepreneurship of the institutions. Increasing need for more efficient agenda- management, inter-sectoral policy coordination and effective brokerage could not be met by the preexisting institutional design.¹¹⁰ Instead national governments have sought to regain control of the setting of the Union's agenda which led to a gradual empowerment of the Presidency in the Council.¹¹¹ The reason for this path is difficult to explore. However, with the EU becoming more present on the international stage, under its second pillar, the Council had to be firmly represented at an equal setting for all Member States. With the management of external affairs and the high profile that followed, other fields of policies were accompanied and the Council Presidency engaged in a broader agenda management.¹¹²

The Presidency plays an important role on a day to day basis, where the entrepreneurial leadership, with managing the agenda, is the core activity.¹¹³ It is not just to set the agenda that has become an instrument of the Presidency. Even though the Presidency often finds itself constrained to cooperate with the Commission, due to formal agenda setting, agenda management has proven much broader. The pure agenda setting is generally restricted to present a program of priorities, when entering office, but throughout the Presidential period there are several tools. Tallberg recognises, besides the agenda setting, the powers of agenda structuring and agenda exclusion as instruments for the Presidency. That is to say that the institution can through the chair prioritise and deemphasise issues and thereby affecting the outcomes. However, there must be a confined balance between the management of the agenda and the fulfillment of acting as an honest broker.¹¹⁴ Being an effective mediator, will be undermined if the chair would abuse its agenda management abilities and this could affect the entrepreneurial efficiency.¹¹⁵ Even so, the Presidency is providing leadership that would otherwise be missing in an enlarged Union.

The Commission's growth in size over the latest years, due to a functional need, has not seemed to lead to an entrepreneurial expansion.¹¹⁶ The 1990's were dominated by cautious policy consolidations and the Commission seemed

¹⁰⁹ Hayes-Renshaw *et al.*, 1995 p. 571.

¹¹⁰ Blavoukos *et al.*, 2007, p. 237.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 237, Christiansen, 2001b, p. 142.

¹¹² Christiansen, 2001b, p. 143.

¹¹³ Metcalfe, 1998, p. 416.

¹¹⁴ Tallberg, Jonas, *The agenda-shaping powers of the Council Presidency* (Elgström, Ole, 2003) pp.20f.

¹¹⁵ Christiansen, 2001b, p. 144.

¹¹⁶ Christiansen, 2001c, p. 100.

gradually more dependent on Council support for policy activism.¹¹⁷ In order to secure passage for proposals, the Commission is often required to cooperate with the Presidency of the Council and place themselves close to Member States preferences, instead of advancing own proposals.¹¹⁸ Consequently, the policy entrepreneurship and the role as a driving force of the Union have changed considerably. Instead of being the creator, the Commission has entered into a role similar to the ones of the Member States where it has to focus on its material strength and work in networks with other actors. In other words, the Commission is more engaged in pushing for agreements than influencing policy outcomes.¹¹⁹

Furthermore, the inter-institutional relations between the Council and the Commission are becoming more important and must not be overlooked. The entrepreneurial branch of the leadership has indeed become a dual one of shared competences and very dependent upon a good relationship between the leadership of both institutions. Hence, there are several ways to reach the agenda. Policy proposals are either established in the Council from above, predominately by the rotating Presidency, or it can gain approval by experts on lower levels of the Commission. Depending on the issue, policy experts of the Commission or broader political actors of the Council can lead the policies through the agenda to final deliberation.¹²⁰

The changing behaviour of the Commission can also partly depend on the strengthening of the comitology in the beginning of the 90's. Some scholars mean that it was seriously interrupting the entrepreneurship of the Commission.¹²¹ The primary task of the comitology was initially to constrain the excessive entrepreneurial ambitions of the Commission, as a new instrument of surveillance for principals over the supranational agent. The dynamics of the comitology itself was nevertheless never realised. Later on the apparatus has grown into an incomprehensible transnational network which itself needs to be controlled.¹²²

The overlapping tasks of the Council Presidency and the Commission have raised opinions about merging the two positions into one executive power. This was quickly removed from the agenda as it was too controversial. Instead the latest suggestions for treaty reforms put forward the idea of a permanent President for the Council, overcoming the inconsistency dilemma. This is likely to further decrease the entrepreneurial leadership of the Commission, which probably would be left with administrative tasks.¹²³

The permanent President would, on the other hand, be likely to improve the entrepreneurial policy planning of the Council. He/she would have the capacity of making package deals over large policy areas. However, the exact abilities and

¹¹⁷ Nugent, 1997, p. 290.

¹¹⁸ Pollack, 2003, p. 124.

¹¹⁹ Warntjen, 2007, p. 1154.

¹²⁰ Princen *et al.*, 2006, p. 1129.

¹²¹ Christiansen, 2001c, p. 105.

¹²² Dehousse, 2003, pp. 809f.

¹²³ Blavoukos *et al.*, 2007, p. 237.

capacities of the new President can only be speculated. Probably, will the success still be dependent on the ability to work closely with the Commission.¹²⁴

4.3.3 Intellectual Leadership

The bold policy expansion of the Delors Commissions in the 80's and early 90's was not followed up by subsequent Presidents. The activism seemed to overreach itself and was replaced by considerably more pragmatic attitudes. Even if the Commission has expanded its resources of expertise it has not been as successful in converting it into intellectual leadership, as it used to.¹²⁵ In fact, the Commission embodies a high level of expertise, brokering skills and institutional persistence and even scores high approving rates, of institutional behaviour, in Union polls.¹²⁶ However, the growing size and greater specialisation within the Commission have amplified the internal divisions and later years have demonstrated problems of internal cohesion.¹²⁷

The main difference lies instead in two important aspects. Despite the Commission's general aim of pushing for integration it is less perceived as an independent actor. It has thereby lost some of its intellectual capital and instead acts on the same level as many other actors in the EU polity and thereby is often met with suspicion from the Member States. Furthermore, but still connected to this, the Commission has lost its visionary guidance, which was a focal point for earlier leaders. Even though it tries to keep the values vivid, the institution seems less visionary and increasingly pragmatic in its conduct. This is largely due to the fact that treaty revisions have emphasised the pragmatism of the Council instead of the visionary leadership in the Commission.

4.3.4 Concluding remarks

The latest period suggests that there is a major change in the leadership of the Union. The agenda setting instrument is becoming more complex with more actors involved. The most obvious change is the slowdown in Commission activism, as the institution seems to be more anxious to be on good footing with the Member States. This has made the Commission to exercise its leadership through new channels with the effect that it is perceived less as an impartial actor. More leadership focus has instead turned to the Presidency of the Council, which is reflected in current treaty reforms. The President performs a representative role as well as important entrepreneurial aspects. By making the Presidency permanent

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 247ff.

¹²⁵ Nugent, 1995, p. 619.

¹²⁶ Pollack, 2003, p. 125.

¹²⁷ Christiansen, 2003a, p. 751.

the lack of consistency is likely to be overcome. As shown however, the decreased visionary leadership is a substantial effect of this ongoing reform.

5 Conclusion

The European Union is under permanent change. Often it is criticised for not producing enough results and not being efficient enough in enabling policy proposals. Suggestions have been that it is the lack of leadership in the Union that has caused the inertia and stagnation.

In this thesis I have examined what leadership can consist of. By conceptualising leadership in three categories I have distinguished criteria which can be located in the institutions of the EU. In the historical outlook, I have discovered that the elements of different types of leadership have changed considerably over the years. Thus, it is not as much a lack of leadership but rather a change in leadership that has occurred.

In my analysis I have discovered that the entrepreneurial and visionary leadership, that was initially supposed to be the tasks for the Commission, have become important functions of the Council Presidency. The Commission has gradually been deprived of its perception as an engine of integration and the constant advocate of European solutions. With the exception of the Delors era, the Commission has been marginalised in its formal role as policy initiator and agenda setter. Instead the Commission has increasingly come to be regarded as a 28th player in the political bargaining. However, the Commission has adapted and become efficient in providing leadership in other ways than the initial delegation provided. Predominately, has it increased its structural powers and become more effective as a controller of the networks. Because of the increased Council leadership, the Commission has been forced to find other means of leading the Union.

The Council, on the other hand has moved in the opposite direction. It has become more supranational in its behaviour, by its delegation of important entrepreneurial tasks to the Presidency. The rotating chair has thus received unprecedented force to influence the agenda, by sophisticated agenda management. Consequently, the institutions are in a process of switching roles even if they are struggling by holding on to their initial prerogatives.

Perhaps the hypothesis, of lack of leadership, is correct in one sense; namely the loss of intellectual and visionary leadership. Especially if one compares to the Delors Presidencies with today's leadership, there is no institution that bears the European idea and urge for supranational solutions even though the same values are present in the Commission organisation. At the same time the organisational theory has been difficult to apply on the institutions. The leadership characteristics of a company seem to be different in international political units. The focus on corporate visions and values is much neglected in the EU and this could be part of an explanation of the lack of distinct leadership. Even so, that form of leadership

has been beneficial in providing interesting input to the intellectual leadership in the analysis.

What has caused the described development is difficult to say. There can hardly be a single factor that drives the development. The weak formal platform for leadership might be one answer and that all actors consequently are trying to do the most in pushing for own preferences. It is also difficult to escape the fact that personal ambitions have influenced the development.

The presented changes also affect the institutional balance and the separation of powers. The Commission has received competition as the executive by the Council which, in turn, has stepped out of a purely legislative role. The Commission increasingly use its capacity in the judicial field as well. In entrepreneurial leadership terms, this blur of separations is especially evident. The Union has become an agenda setting paradise with many actors working on multi levels.

The plans of inserting a permanent President in the Council, contains both risks and opportunities. The new leadership would be likely to prevent the inconsistency problems, tormenting current Presidents. However, the success is not clear as he/she would still be dependent on cooperation with the Commission as it is likely to be the intellectual leader with all its expertise and its position at the heart of the Union.

The alleged lack of leadership can thus only be partly true. My examination is suggesting that there is a lack of leadership, collected in one body. The leadership has even evolved to schizophrenic proportions as the institutions are considerably overlapping and performing each others tasks. It is probably best described as a flexible leadership, where actors rapidly change and so does the balance between institutions with it. The opportunities of the flexible leadership can be that any actor with strong preferences can seize the leadership without being too constrained by formal settings. It is also likely that the capacities of the institutions are heavily dependent on personal variables and the context in which they operate. With reference to this, can it not be substantiated that solely the Council is expanding its leadership to the detriment of the Commission. Instead both institutions are overlapping each other.

It follows from the forgoing that it is evident that the relations between the Commission and the Council are vital for a fruitful leadership in all its elements. The insertion of comitology and the Council Secretariat are institutions which have the potential in binding the institutions together. However, there are also risks that the more actors coming into the process, the more blurring the leadership will be, with potential negative consequences for democracy. This is though, just a hypothesis and has not been substantiated in this thesis.

For a deepened understanding of leadership performance and what causes institutional action in this field, more research is needed. With an institutionalist perspective it will still be the institutions that are those leading actors. Hence, empirical studies of inter- institutional relations would provide more ideas of how the flexible leadership is operated in practice. These relations would also be interesting in order to reveal what mechanisms that force and constrain institutions to provide leadership of different sorts. More substantially, one could

use the theoretical framework of this analysis and study a certain policy field and tracing where the different input is coming from and which institution that is striving for the result of the process. In the light of this, I see many interesting areas of research coming out of this thesis. However, this thesis has merely raised the question of institutional relations and provided a framework for coming analysis. Upcoming changes in the Lisbon Treaty, whenever ratified, are possibly changing those perceptions again. This could at least make the flexible leadership less dependent on personal parameters but hardly less flexible. Therefore, coming examinations must always take into consideration the time factor, as this thesis has proved that the leadership is constantly changing in character and scope within the institutions.

Returning to the question of whom one is going to call if one wants to call Europe; no clear answer can be given. Still it depends on the contextual setting. It is linked to which issue is handled and on what kind of leadership is sought. A representative is not necessarily holding any substantial leadership and the candidate who formally has the power must not be mistaken for being actually influential. It might be best to put the call on hold due to the fact that the “Emperor” is currently changing his clothes.

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